

February 1960

**READING 3****ALL GROUPS**

(Those of you who, last week, studied the diagram of the three dimensions of Time, can keep it in mind in relation to our study tonight. Others can just as well begin from here and approach that diagram by the following steps, beginning with the most simple.)

In order to get the full flavour of the Seven Cosmoses (simultaneously existing, each with its own space-time) we try to develop a certain method of meditation based on a very ancient teaching – ‘The Seven Principles of the Sankhya’. It can eventually be applied to everything; but since real meditation cannot exist without Self-remembering, we begin by applying it to ourselves. And because the human organism is so big and so complicated, we take one small part of it to think about, we take just *one hand*. When one of us was personally taught this method by an exponent of the Sankhya System, he was made to consider each of the Seven Principles in relation to his hand for a whole week and had to show some result before he was allowed to go on to the next.

So, then, we begin with the *First Principle*; I hold my hand before me and I think of the units of which it is composed – skin and sense organs, nails, connective tissue, muscles, bones and joints, arteries, veins, nerves. Not electrons or molecules or even cells – they are too remote. I regard my hand as if it were severed from the body, at the moment of death just before those tissues begin to disintegrate. One does not bother about minutiae of detail; one tries to form a picture of all the kinds of raw material which together go to the making of a hand. In the same way, one could regard a chair or a vase of flowers – just in terms of the materials of which an object is made. This First Principle is called in the Sankhya the ‘Tool’ and given its Sanskrit name of ‘Sthula Sharira’.

Will you try this exercise, then, at any quiet moment during the coming week? First come to yourself, let everything connected with personal or subjective time drop away and then simply regard your hand from this single point of view.

(Pause)

**THE SECOND PRINCIPLE**

You remember that it was suggested that we try as often as possible to regard our own hand ‘as if it were severed from the body at the moment before disintegration sets in, trying to form a picture of the kinds of raw material which go to the making of a hand’. With the cutting off of the circulation, all the chemical changes of metabolism have ceased. The hand is like the hand of a statue. The method is used in modern surgery (particularly in repair of the heart) of using the deep freeze which makes possible a state of suspended animation for several hours. We can see that such a frozen hand would correspond to the Point I on the diagram of the three dimensions of Time, opposite which it would be possible to write ‘First Principle’ – the ‘Tool’ – or the ‘Sthula Sharira’.

(Note: take observations on the week’s work; keep them short.)

Now we must go on to consider the *Second Principle of the Sankhya*. Look at your hand as it is now – a part of your body, warm and alive. Tissue respiration is going on, with the consequent chemical changes of metabolism; cells are living and reproducing and dying; waste material is being carried away, outworn tissues are being renewed. What is the difference between your hand in a state of suspended animation and your hand alive and warm? The Sankhya idea is that the difference lies in the entry of the Second Principle – the ‘Life Principle’ or ‘Prana’ – and this could now be written in opposite Point II.

What must be understood is that the two are incommensurate with one another. With all the synthetic skills of the Biochemist, it has never been possible to create a single living cell. It is in a different dimension of space-time, and this is being continually forgotten nowadays. We know that life is based upon those giant self-reproducing protein molecules (with their enzyme systems) like DNA and RNA; but we forget that these will only function as the raw materials of life if they are organised within the structure of a living organism. In the same way, a virus cannot proliferate outside a living cell, though like anything else some viruses can be kept indefinitely in a state of suspended animation by crystallisation. The crystalline tobacco mosaic virus belongs to the First Principle; a dangerous active virus in the nose of a susceptible person during an influenza epidemic manifests the Second Principle, or ‘Prana’, as well.

During the coming week, then, let us also consider as often as we can, our own hand as a living part of our own animate body, and try to understand through it the meaning of the Second Principle.

(Pause)

### THE THIRD PRINCIPLE

So far, we have considered the human hand in terms of its Form and of its Vitality, and these apply to any human hand. But now look at your hand again – the shape and size of it; the proportions of the divisions of the fingers and of the fingers to the palm; the lines on the palm, the faint whorls on the balls of the fingers and thumb which are recorded as ‘fingerprints’, the roughness or smoothness and colour of the skin, the scars and other records of its owner’s use of his hand, and so on. This is *your* hand and it is unlike any other hand in the world. To the discerning it can reveal much about your physical constitution, your character and manner of life. Moreover, the essential features of this individuality remain the same from birth to death, even though the individual cells are perpetually dying and being reborn. Criminals have often tried, and failed, to disguise their finger-prints, but even if they cut off or burn the skin it will grow again to the same detectable pattern.

This unchanging individuality is part of the *Third Principle of the Sankhya*, and its name in Sanskrit is the ‘Linga Sharira’.

The following quotation (P. D. Ouspensky, *Tertium Organum*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Kegan Paul, 1939, p.53) gives the meaning:

The four-dimensional body is the infinite number of three-dimensional bodies. That is, the four-dimensional body is the infinite number of *moments of existence* of the three-dimensional one ... The three-dimensional body which we see ... is, as it were, only one of a series of pictures on a cinematograph film. ...

If we consider the physical body of a man, we shall find in it besides its ‘matter’ something, it is true, changing, but undoubtedly *one and the same* from birth until death.

This something is the *Linga Sharira* of Eastern Philosophy, i.e. the form on which our physical body is moulded. That philosophy regards the physical body as something impermanent which is in a condition of perpetual interchange with its surroundings. The particles come and go. After one second the body is already not absolutely the same as it was one second before. Today it is in a considerable degree not that which it was yesterday... But despite all this, *something* always persists from birth to death... This is the *Linga Sharira*.

The *Linga Sharira* is the form, the image; it changes, but remains the same. That image of a man which we are able to represent to ourselves is not the *Linga-Sharira*. But if we try to represent to ourselves mentally the image of a man from birth to death, with all the particularities and traits of childhood, manhood and senility, as if extended in time, we shall approach the idea of the *Linga Sharira*. ...

It is curious that in mystical literature a number of references to the 'signature of things' can be found. I give them the name which was given to them by Jacob Boehme in this description by Boehme's Biographer:

About the year 1600, in the twenty-fifth year of his age, he was again surrounded by the divine light and replenished with the heavenly knowledge; insomuch as going abroad in the fields to a green at Goerlitz, he there sat down and, viewing the herbs and grass of the field in his inward light, he saw into their essences, use and properties, which were discovered to him by their lineaments, figures and signatures. In like manner he beheld the whole creation, and from that foundation he afterwards wrote his book, *De Signatura Rerum*.

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When we come to discuss this elusive Third Principle, our mistake has always been to see only one aspect of it. Certainly it includes what the Scientists call the 'Physical Constitution' and the various 'physical types' into which men are divided – the four blood groups, the endocrine characters, and so on. But it includes beside that what the System calls the 'Individual Essence', many of the properties of which are erroneously ascribed by the Scientists to 'Heredity'. And it can also be considered as presided over by all of the Central Nervous System (including spinal cord and brain-stem) as far as the 'great central headquarters' deep to the cerebral hemispheres. But this can more clearly be defined next week when the 'Fourth Principle' is enunciated.

But do not forget that, in us, this Third Principle – with all its potentialities – is very undeveloped. There exist in the great Laboratory of Nature, however, experiments in the perfection of some of these potentialities. One of these (in relation to movement) is the cat tribe. The cat shows different line of evolution from that of the dog and the monkey. A good description is to be found in *The Listener*, January 28th 1960, p.194 – 'The Essential Structure of a Cat' by R.A. Green:

In the course of their similar evolution several important differences of structure have taken place between cats and dogs. The range of movements of a domestic cat is far wider than it is for a dog. A cat can not only jump better and fall safer; it can also scale fences and it can still climb trees. Two differences that contribute to these ends are a flattened face and retractile claws.

The shortening of the full-length muzzle, still present in all wild dogs, seems to have taken place early in the evolution of the cat family. The importance of this to the cats is

that now their two eyes can look straight ahead and focus together on a moving object. Apart from the cats, only members of the ape and monkey families, including ourselves, have this advantage. It enables us and the cats to judge distances and depths to a degree denied to all animals in whom the eyes look out sideways.

The cat uses its retractile claws not only for striking down its prey, but also for gripping the branches of trees and the vertical surface of a wooden fence. Unlike the dogs, cats have not entirely lost the ability to supinate the hand: this gives them a greater mobility for jumping and tree-climbing. Together with the claws, it also enables the hand to be used to some extent for manipulation.

The biggest difference between dogs and cats, however, lies not in their skeleton but in their muscles. A cat has a few extra muscles, and one or two others attached in slightly different relationship to the joints. But the striking difference is the way in which a cat uses its muscles.

Oppositional activity of muscles is present when any mammal moves any of its joints. But the amount of opposition varies in different kinds of movements and in different groups of animals. When a cat is stalking a bird, alternately freezing in its tracks and then gliding forward in a crouched position, the muscles of its limbs are finely balanced in oppositional activity. In this way, any of its joints can instantly be held motionless in any position.

It has been discovered that people of advanced muscular skill, like athletes and ballet dancers, use their muscles in this way to a far higher degree than do other people. They have acquired this skill in the course of their training. The other unconscious muscular quality they have acquired is a high degree of relaxation in all the muscles they are using for any particular movement. Thus, no highly skilled human movement is possible without the muscles responsible for it showing two qualities: maximal relaxation and maximal oppositional activity. The cat family is naturally endowed with both these qualities to a greater extent than any human being, however skilled. It is this double quality characteristic of the activity of its muscles that, more than any other single factor, makes a cat what it is.

A cat always moves with a feather-weight tread that appears to us as stealthy even when he is merely crossing a room. This is because of the way he always uses his muscles: highly relaxed and finely opposed to each other on opposite sides of every moving joint. For the same reason he almost oozes out of your grip as you try to pick him up, and he can step delicately amid china on a tea-table. He can also leap upwards and across gaps between furniture with what looks like effortless ease.

(From a talk on Network Three)

(Pause)

More seriously, what is important to us is that this same faculty can be developed in man as one of the 'ingredients' of the Second or 'Natural Body', about which we will later have much to say.

If one understands about this, one can recognize the Level of Being of a man who has developed and crystallised the Natural Body as a result of School work. Ordinarily we recognize each other by the quirks and peculiarities of our facial expression and our movements brought about by habit and muscular tension. But when the outward expression and the movements of a man are harmoniously developed, he acquires a strange kind of invisibility. No peculiarities stand out. One such man (from whom we learnt this System) had been very prominent in

Moscow Society before the Revolution and escaped with a price on his head. But he had to go back into Russia shortly after, to rescue his wife's possessions. He described to me how he walked along the platform at Moscow station with trigger-happy Red Guards all around, in such a perfectly *natural* manner that they never saw him at all!

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(In conclusion you might like to consider the first three Principles in relation to Points I, II and III of the diagram of dimensions of Time, of which they are a particular case, which can be established through self-observation.)

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This is the diagram of the Three Dimensions of Time referred to in 60/7.



